

Hepatitis C in African American communities: Epidemiology and strategies to increase awareness and engagement

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Presenter Disclosures

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Hepatitis C disproportionately impacts African Americans

- Hepatitis C (HCV) is twice as prevalent among African Americans.²
- Research has shown that African Americans are more likely to be diagnosed later, reflecting missed opportunities for prevention.³
- Approximately, 75% of all people living with chronic Hepatitis C were born between 1945 and 1965 (baby boomers) and among African American baby boomers, 1 in 13 is chronically infected with HCV.²
- Liver and intrahepatic bile duct cancers are significantly higher in African Americans compared to non-Hispanic whites.^{4,5}
- Chronic liver disease, often attributable to untreated hepatitis C infection, is a leading cause of death among African American baby boomers.⁶

1 US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Hepatitis C Information for Health Professionals. <http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/HCV/>.

2 Armstrong GL, et.al. The prevalence of hepatitis C virus infection in the United States, 1999 through 2002. *Ann Intern Med.* 2006; 144 (10):705-714.

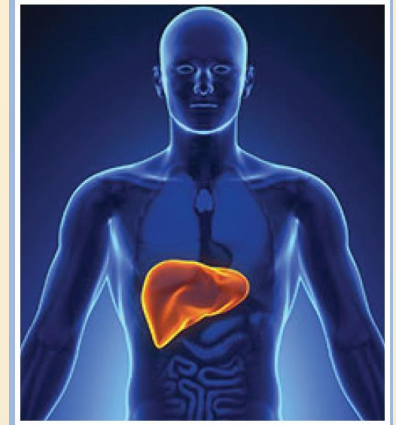
3 Moorman et al. Late Diagnosis of Hepatitis C Virus Infection in the Chronic Hepatitis Study (CHeCS): Missed Opportunities for Intervention. *Hepatology.* 2015; 61 (5)1479-1484.

4 Sarathchandra I. Reddy and Chinweike Ukomadu, *Cancer Epidemiol Biomarkers Prev* March 2003

5 <https://nccd.cdc.gov/uscs/cancersbyraceandethnicity.aspx>

6 Forde KA, et al. Hepatitis B and C in African Americans: Current: Status and Continued Challenges. *Clin Gastroenterol Hepatol.* 2014; 12 (5): 738-748.

Hepatitis C Health Disparities in African American Communities



- In 2013, the rate of HCV related deaths among African Americans was nearly double that of Whites.⁷
- For persons born during 1945 to 1965
 - Prevalence of HCV is 5.3 times higher than other ages (3.25% vs. 0.55%).
 - HCV infection prevalence was highest among non-Hispanic black males (8.12%), followed by non-Hispanic white males (4.05%) and Mexican-American males (3.41%).
 - Up to 75% do not know they are infected.⁸
- African Americans account for 11% of the population, yet represented 25% of participants living with HIV.⁹
 - Among individuals coinfecting with HIV in the U.S., an estimated 25% are coinfecting with hepatitis C.

⁷ US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Surveillance for Viral Hepatitis – United States, 2013.

<http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/statistics2013surveillance/index.htm#tabs-801919-5>.

⁸ Smith, AASLD Liver Meeting 2011. Armstrong, Ann Int med 2006. Kramer, Hepatology 2011. Ly, Ann Int Med 2012.

⁹ Denniston et al., Ann Intern Med 2014

Opportunities to Address Hepatitis C in African American Communities

- Until the recent development of groundbreaking, oral, curative therapies, African Americans were significantly less likely to be cured of HCV. ⁶
- The Affordable Care Act provides opportunities to increase access to:
 - screening for hepatitis C.
 - treatment for hepatitis C.
- Growing awareness and momentum around hepatitis C.
 - National Viral Hepatitis Action Plan

⁶ Forde KA, et al. Hepatitis B and C in African Americans: Current: Status and Continued Challenges. Clin Gastroenterol Hepatol. 2014; 12 (5): 738-748.

HHS Efforts to Address Hepatitis C Health Disparities

- HHS 2015 Forum on Hepatitis C in African American Communities.
 - Organized by the HHS Office of HIV/AIDS and Infectious Disease Policy and the HHS Office of Minority Health.
 - Summary report available at aids.gov/hepatitis .
- Hepatitis C & African American Women Webinar.
 - Co-sponsored by the HHS Office of HIV/AIDS and Infectious Disease Policy, the HHS Office of Minority Health, and HHS Office of Women's Health.
- Office of Minority Health HIV Program Demonstrations joint screening HIV and Hepatitis C.



2015 Forum on Hepatitis C in African American Communities

- African American community leaders attended a two-day forum at HHS headquarters to discuss the effects of HCV on African American communities and identify opportunities to increase engagement and awareness of HCV prevention, diagnosis, and treatment.
- Enhanced opportunities thanks to recent approval of curative treatments for HCV are more effective among African Americans than those previously available.
- Participants engaged in group discussions to identify effective approaches to:
 - Educate providers and communities on HCV.
 - Reduce health disparities in African American communities.
 - Develop and engage strategies to improve HCV testing, care, and treatment.

Hepatitis C Forum Recommendations

General recommendations:

- Increase the number of African Americans who are aware of their chronic HCV infection.
- Develop impactful educational efforts to encourage the general public to get screened for HCV and motivate providers to recommend screening.
- Educate communities about HCV and highlight that unlike most chronic infectious diseases, HCV can be cured in most people.
- Incentivize HCV screening to patients and providers by emphasizing that HCV is curable.
- Use personal stories to strengthen community engagement.

Testing & Treatment Recommendations

- Offer hepatitis C testing to African Americans despite the stigma that is presumed to be a barrier. Offering testing provides opportunities to further educate African Americans that individuals can be cured of hepatitis C infection.
- Currently available hepatitis C treatment options can reduce treatment time to 8 – 12 weeks, are injection free, have minimal side effects, and cure over 90% of patients. Curing hepatitis C prevents the risk of subsequent transmission.
- Leverage opportunities provided by the ACA to prevent, diagnose, and treat hepatitis C.
 - A 2011 analysis of the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) data revealed that individuals infected with hepatitis C are less likely to be covered by private insurance compared with the overall population, and only half had any health insurance coverage.
 - Under the ACA, most health plans must cover a set of preventive services recommended by US Preventive Task Force—like immunizations and screening tests—without copay or co-insurance. As such, one-time HCV screening for baby boomers and persons at high risk of infection are now covered at no cost to the individual.

Improving Communication About Hepatitis C

- Actively utilize social media to engage communities and providers.
 - An estimated 61 percent of African Americans use the Internet at home, and 59 percent use smart phones or handheld computers.⁹
 - Optimize limited resources by more widely sharing existing messages and materials without expending time and funds to develop new materials.
- Disseminate hepatitis C educational messages through existing interpersonal and professional networks.
 - Leverage existing networks to reach the community with hepatitis C-related messages and outreach efforts.
 - Community networks present opportunities to reach social service providers and other community workers who can expand and amplify messages among the communities they serve.
 - Webinars can reach large and geographically-dispersed audiences and materials can be archived for on-demand use.

Expanding Capacity & Targeting Hepatitis C Efforts

- Share and promote best practices and successful community-based hepatitis C activities.
 - Partnerships with community groups to develop tablet-based hepatitis C risk assessment tools to supplement existing community-based HIV screening efforts.
 - Use of telemedicine to facilitate hepatitis C treatment within the primary care setting, example: Project ECHO-type model.
 - Cross trainings that promote inclusion of hepatitis C testing and care into existing HIV-based models.
- Expand focused research and surveillance efforts on hepatitis C in African Americans.
 - Need for accurate and timely surveillance data on HCV to inform targeted outreach efforts.
 - Support for hepatitis-specific research needed to develop accurate prevalence and needs assessments and strategies to serve this population.

Using Health Information Technology to Improve Hepatitis C Testing and Linkage to Care

- Invest in an infrastructure to increase hepatitis C screening and linkage to care.
 - Expand screening by adding prompts to electronic health records (EHR) to improve confirmatory testing rates and accurate diagnoses, which may enhance patient follow-up and linkage to treatment.
 - EHRs also normalize screening and alleviate provider discomfort with potential negative patient reactions.
 - Recent CDC study confirms only estimated 50 percent of individuals who test positive for hepatitis C antibody go on to receive confirmatory RNA testing.¹⁰

¹⁰ US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Vital signs: evaluation of hepatitis C virus infection testing and reporting-eight U.S. sites, 2005-2011. MMWR. 2013;62 (18):357-361.

Partnering with Stakeholders to Address Hepatitis C

Create new opportunities for reaching African Americans through partnerships among non-traditional stakeholders.

- Faith-based organizations.
- Print, radio and web media outlets.
- Local Businesses and community networks (e.g., barbershops and nail salons).
- Greek Organizations/African American Pan-Hellenic organizations and Service Leaders .
- Pharmaceutical and Medical Testing companies.

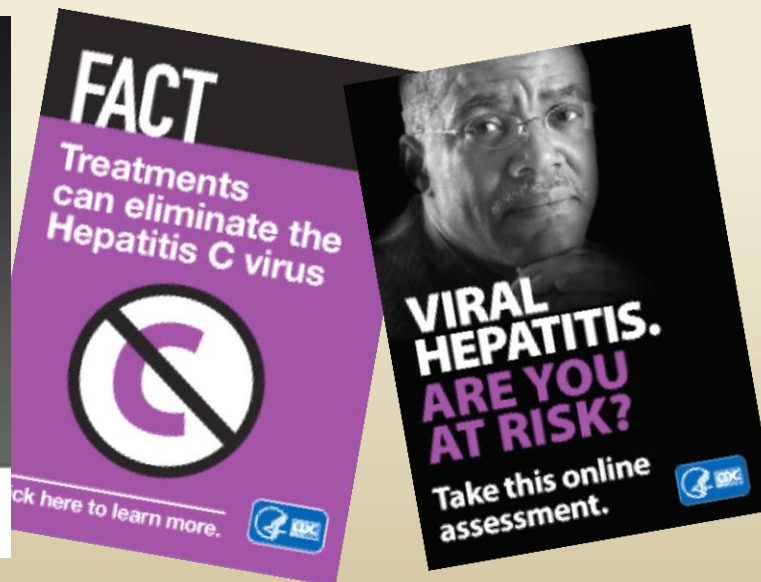
Engaging Families to Address Hepatitis C

- Engage familial support to improve outcomes for individuals with hepatitis C.
- Leverage family members to promote awareness and testing; may also benefit individuals who are diagnosed and ultimately linked to care.
- Build awareness among family members of those who are at-risk for hepatitis C. Expanded awareness may improve outcomes among African Americans by:
 - Motivating screening – Arming family members with the rationale behind birth cohort screening and the benefits of diagnosis and linkage to care can complement provider and community strategies for identification and screening.
 - Promoting retention in care – Providing family members with info on long-term benefits of curing hepatitis C . A well-informed support network of family and friends may help reduce feelings of isolation and encourage individuals to initiate and persist in engagement with the healthcare system.
 - Supporting healthy behaviors – Reductions in weight and alcohol intake, improved diet and exercise, avoidance of certain drugs (e.g., excessive acetaminophen, certain herbal supplements). This support may be beneficial for persons with comorbid conditions such as diabetes and HIV infection.

Hepatitis C in African American Communities: Share and promote resources

Educational campaigns and general resources

- CDC's Know More Hepatitis Campaign (includes digital tools, posters, and trainings).
- The 2014 cross-agency Action Plan for the Prevention, Care, and Treatment of Viral Hepatitis.
- Stakeholders Workbook for Engaging in the Updated Viral Hepatitis Action Plan (includes questions to help groups plan their hepatitis activities).



Hepatitis C in African American Communities:

Share and promote resources

Patient materials

- CDC's Hepatitis C Information for the Public – Patient Education Resources
- US Department of Veterans Affairs Hepatitis C Basics

Provider materials

- CDC Hepatitis C Online (University of Washington Online Course)
- CDC's Hepatitis C Information for Health Professionals
- The American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases and the Infectious Disease Society for America Expert Guidelines for HCV Testing, Management, and Treatment (including those for HIV/HCV co-infected persons)
- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Hepatitis C: For Health Care Providers
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommendations

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